

Prayer Meeting

PURE OFFERINGS.

Week Beginning November 1. Malachi 1:6-11.

Ceremonial offerings had a prominent place in the worship of God's ancient people. Their design was two-fold. They were a means of instruction to the worshiper and those who witnessed the offering and they were an expression of devotion to God. Each class of offerings had a clearly defined significance and appropriate truth was expressed by every authorized service of this character. In the study of the law of offerings we may get a discriminating exposition of the gospel as it was declared later by our Lord himself and by his inspired apostles. This method of teaching was best suited to the earlier stages of the development of Christian truth and to the means of communicating truth that then prevailed. Symbolism was dominant in the structure of language, in methods of communication and in the very process of thought. We now read the records of antiquity as recorded in symbolic characters.

The fact that intellectual processes were habitually expressed through a symbolic medium, involves the appropriateness, if not the necessity, of expressing the devotion of the soul in this way. It was man's method of communicating his mental and spiritual exercises. It accordingly pleased God to appoint chosen ceremonial as the appropriate expression of the soul's devotion. In all worship ancient and modern, formal and informal, public and private, his command is, "Trust in him at all times; ye people pour out your heart before him."

Inasmuch as pure worship was expected, a pure offering was required as an expression of that worship. The quality of the offering was well defined. If it was an animal it was to be without blemish. If it was the product of the field, it must be first fruits or the choicest of the harvest. When the higher truth was to be set forth and the profoundest reverence, or praise, or gratitude were to be expressed, the typical representations of these exercises were to correspond in character. To offer therefore "polluted bread" upon God's altar or "the blind for sacrifice" or "the lame and sick" was condemned as an evil. It was treating God as one would not treat his own superior among men. "For my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts."

There is one offering which is pre-eminent in its acceptance because pre-eminent in its quality. "This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God." "For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." There is a holy and blessed sense in which this offering is ours. By faith we appropriate him, and the merits of his obedience and sufferings are imputed to us. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." "The chastisement of our peace was upon him and with his stripes we are healed." Without this offering all others are unavailing. Though this one, and this alone, all others divinely appointed and rendered in faith, are accepted.

The offering, made in the name of the one Mediator, which we are habitually to bring to God's altar, is ourselves. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Our persons are to be dedicated to God. All the powers with which he has endowed us, all our capacities, our faculties and talents, our souls and bodies are to be given unreservedly to him to be used according to his holy will for the accomplishment of his wise and gracious purposes. We are not our own; we are bought with a price; we must therefore glorify God in our bodies and spirits which are his.

Involved in this personal dedication is the surrender to him of our substance; the material possessions which he has entrusted to our care. If only the wealth of the world were dedicated to God, how society would be transformed! The very act of surrendering all to God would itself contribute a blessing greater perhaps, than the fruits of its administration. The bulk of God's bounty is diverted from its appropriate uses, and is consumed on the altar of Mammon.

Another offering is that of our service. This is an age of activity. Men are running to and fro and knowledge is increasing. Intensity is characteristic of our people. It is a time for dedicating the spirit of the age to holy uses. Are we as intent upon spiritual achievement as men of the world are upon getting gain? There are signs that the Church is girding itself for a mightier and supreme advance against the hosts of ungodliness and for the rescue of the multitudes that are ready to perish. Let us thank God and take courage.

Young People's Societies

BEULAH LAND.

Topic for Sunday, November 14: Pilgrim's Progress, Series XI. Beulah Land. Isaiah 62:3-5.

DAILY READINGS.

Monday: Beulah Land, the heart. Romans 14:16-19.

Tuesday: A land of heart-peace. John 16:22, 33.

Wednesday: A land of plenty. Jeremiah 31:12-14, 25, 26.

Thursday: A land of joy. Isaiah 66:10-12, 14.

Friday: A land of fellowship. Galatians 5:25-6:6.

Saturday: A land of love. 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.

Away from the Hill Difficulty and the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and the danger of Vanity Fair, and the gloom of Doubting Castle, and the drowsiness of the Enchanted Land, Christian and Hopeful came at last to the country of Beulah.

Beulah is a place of delight, not of dreams. It is the garden of the Lord, where even though the celestial city be not yet reached the believer may taste of the joys of heaven. "Celestial fruits on earthly ground, from faith and hope do grow." The Delectable Mountain vision and the Beulah Land enjoyment are foretastes of heaven.

The believer has a right to Beulah. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen." Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob "all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

Heaven ought to be enjoyed on earth. Heaven is a condition as well as a place. The Kingdom is in the heart. That one who has Christ and his likeness must have already, in advance, the chiefest glory of the world to come. To wait for the enjoyment of being with Christ and of partaking of the fruits of life until the river of death has been passed is to miss a right and a joy.

God gives this Beulah joy both as a reward to his saints for their faithfulness and as a preparation for the last great trial through which they must pass. And he oftenest puts it just on the margin of the river of death that their feet on entering the stream may not feel the cold, but enter into full assurance of faith, nothing wavering.

The Beulah Land is wide to some and narrow to others. Much depends upon how well we have let the King rule in our hearts, upon the care with which we have sought to do his will, upon the gratitude and appreciation we have for his marvelous deliverance of our souls, upon the trust which we have placed in his precious promises. All these may be increased, and if we desire a long and rich Beulah Land we may have it.

Temperament may have something to do with the possession to some of a Beulah. Those who spend all their life time subject to bondage and in fear of death need not miss it, however, for the richest promises have been made and those who dwell under the clouds have no warrant for staying there. Let them learn to trust Christ more and think less of themselves and of their gloomy fears.

It is the knowledge of sin and the sense of guilt that deprives the soul of Beulah experience. Let all who suffer thus remember that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses from all sin. Our Saviour is a complete Saviour, not a half way Redeemer. "By one offering he hath forever perfected them who are sanctified thereby." "Let not your hearts be troubled."